



COMMISSION ON  
MIDDLE EASTERN  
AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
M I C H I G A N

**MEETING MINUTES**

**JANUARY 28, 2016, 12:00 P.M.**

ARAB AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM, THE ANNEX  
13624 MICHIGAN AVENUE  
DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

**MINUTES**

Commissioners Present:

Michael Romaya, Vice-Chair	Dave Abdallah
Lina Harajli, Treasurer	Wendy Acho
Suzanne Sukkar, Secretary	Bishr Al-Ujayli
Mariam Bazzi, Trustee	Fay Beydoun (arrived late)
Bing Goei, Ex-Officio	Susan Dabaja
	Adel Mozip

Excused: Manal Saab, Chair; Sharif Hussein, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair; Haifa Fakhouri, Helen Habib, Abe Munfakh

Guests: Dept. of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) Director Mike Zimmer, Assistant Attorney General Ron Robinson, LARA Karen Phillippi, MDCR Charles Schoder, MDCR Vicky Garcia, AANM Devon Akmon, Paul Sopheia, Reporter Arab American News Ali Harb

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Michael Romaya at 12:08 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present. Museum Director Devon Akmon provided the welcoming remarks and presented on the Patriots and Peacemaker exhibition.

II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

**MOTION: Commissioner Sukkar moved to accept the minutes of September 29, 2015. Motion was supported by Commissioner Al-Ujayli. Motion passed.**

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

**MOTION: Commissioner Sukkar moved to accept the meeting agenda as presented. Motion was supported by Commissioner Al-Ujayli. Motion passed.**

IV. SWEARING IN OF COMMISSIONER MOZIP

Commissioner Romaya conducted the swearing-in of Commissioner Mozip.

V. REFUGEE STRATEGY WORKING GROUP, LARA DIRECTOR MIKE ZIMMER  
Executive Order 2016-3:

Director Zimmer stated that the Commission of Middle Eastern American Affairs, the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan and the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission will be transferred by Executive Order 2016-3 by Governor Snyder from the Department of Civil Rights to the Dept. of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. This executive order will be effective in 60 days (March 26.) The reorganization will help streamline human resources and budgetary functions within each commission.

#### Flint Water Crisis:

Director Zimmer reported on the Flint Water Crisis stating they are trying to reach every population. There are four larger ethnic communities; Hispanic, Chinese, Arabic and Mung they need help reaching. Director Zimmer stated the initial documents have been translated into the four languages regarding the testing of water, where to obtain water and filters, health, nutrition, how to safely use tap water, how to care for pets, in addition to press releases that state no identification is necessary to receive resources. He asked the Commission for assistance in outreach to the Arab community. They are looking for locations such as community centers and/or churches/mosques that have Arabic speakers where information and supplies can be set up and distributed to the public.

Ms. Karen Phillippi stated that once additional documents are translated into Arabic that they can be distributed to Commissioners to assist in distributing them to their communities.

#### Refugee Strategy Work Group:

Ms. Phillippi reported that the state is currently reviewing the process of refugee settlements, determining where there are gaps in services, what is working well, and what are the refugee settlement numbers, as well as possibly increasing the number of refugees coming to Michigan.

Director Zimmer stated there is a task force comprised of various state departments discussing what state resources are available. Michigan has received 6% of the 80,000 refugees. There is still ongoing communication between the state of Michigan and the federal government regarding the impact of an increase of refugee settlements in Michigan.

Mr. Bing Goei stated that Michigan has received over 300 refugees, including Syrians, in the last 3 months.

#### VI. CMEAA PROPOSED PROJECTS

It was suggested that the Commission wait for the results of the Town Hall Meetings to see what the needs of the community are, as well as to work and collaborate with other agencies and organizations that have more resources and to not duplicate efforts.

#### VII. TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Vice-Chairman Romaya stated the Commission is interested in hosting town hall meetings across the state in the next 6-12 months. He explained that Commissioners would volunteer hosting these town hall meetings and receive feedback from the community on what they feel are important issues. Once the important issues are identified, proposed projects would be developed, and then sub-committees formed to lead the projects.

There was discussion on who would coordinate, set-up and identify where these Town Hall meetings would be held. Vice-Chairman Romaya stated that the state of Michigan staff could assist in getting these meetings set-up and Commissioners can find out through other agencies where the most populated areas where their communities reside are.

Commissioners asked Mr. Bing Goei how the Asian American Commission held their Town Hall Meetings. Mr. Goei stated he would discuss the issue with Denise Yee Grimm about sharing the initial questions they used to facilitate conversation with the community. Vice-Chairman Romaya and Bing Goei agreed to work together to create a uniform agenda and then distribute to the remainder of the Commissioners for feedback. Commissioner Lina Harajli offered to look into what cities they should hold the Town Halls Meetings. Vice-Chairman Romaya stated he would like to see 6-8 Town Hall Meetings that should take approximately 3 months to complete.

VIII. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC


Mr. Sopheia suggested that the Commission consider addressing issues such as financial illiteracy and cash businesses in the community.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- 1) Press Release process: There was discussion on the review process for press releases. Commissioner Fay Beydoun suggested discussing the issue with Chair Saab on her opinion.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

  
Suzanne K. Sukkar, Secretary

  
Michael Romaya, Vice-Chairperson